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ART. V.—THE "INDEPENDENTS" IN THE CANVASS.

JUST before the first meetings intended to have a bearing on the Presidential nominations for the campaign now going on were held, Mr. W. M. Evarts one day remarked to Carl Schurz that the Republican party in its then condition reminded him of nothing so much as of an army whose term of enlistment had expired. Mr. Evarts is justly famed for the witty and incisive way in which he expresses what other people think, but he has not often had the good fortune to hit off a happier simile than this. It included in ten words a pamphletful of political insight, and accounted at once for that large amount of individual action which is such an essential feature in the present canvass. The field is full of stragglers.

On the slavery issue the Republican party enlisted for the war. So far at least as the loyal States of the Union were concerned, it numbered among its leaders or in its ranks a very considerable preponderance of the political virtue and intelligence, and of the disinterested public spirit of the community. It mustered, of course, its train of camp-followers and stragglers and adventurers,—those who joined its ranks at the eleventh hour, and even just before the striking of noon,—who were as loud-mouthed and repulsive a set of political vagabonds as ever canted about principles or hungered after loaves and fishes. For a number of years this element, as a whole, retained its proper position at the rear. In proportion, however, as the objects for which the party was organized became accomplished facts, it assumed a greater and greater prominence, until at last it secured for itself an almost undisputed ascendancy. This was not unnatural, but it none the less indicated the close of a term of service. Accordingly, about the time when those who never knew what a principle was had pushed their way to the front and were confidently appealing to a glorious record, those who had made the party and inspired its policy through its years of active life found themselves once more pondering over new issues and striking out in independent action.

With the Democratic party the case was somewhat different. The very completeness of success which deprived the Republican party of its occupation in great degree re-created an occupation for the Democracy. That party, as such, had, anterior to the war, been long and laboriously formed as the Northern ally of the slaveholding oligarchy of the South. Into it had naturally drifted the great mass of the political ignorance, corruption, and venality of the free States, and, throughout the Rebellion, it constituted simply a cowardly and traitorous opposition, always gravitating heavily towards its ancient allies, but utterly unable, from want of that direction to which it was accustomed, to originate a policy or to conduct a respectable opposition. A lifedom of leading-strings had wholly unfitted it for independent political action. The close of the war did not at once restore to it either a lead or a policy. The old slave oligarchy was utterly ruined, and it took time for the new South either to organize a policy or develop political leaders. The lapse of eight years, however, supplied that need, and at the elections of the year 1874 it became apparent that the South, as such, was once more a political power, though no longer cemented and welded together by the one overshadowing interest of a property in slaves. In place of this, however, there was a new and temporary bond of common action,—the desire and determination on the part of the white population in those States to recover their political independence in the Union, and to throw off the odious rule of the enfranchised Africans. This, on the other hand, it had been the whole aim and object of the reconstruction policy to prevent. Thus gradually but surely the South once more became a political unit, and, as it did so, the Democratic party of the North, true to its instincts and traditions, gravitated towards it and assumed at last the shape of a coherent opposition. The Republicans had restored to it a mission. It is always so in revolutionary times. It was so in England in 1649, and in France in 1793. Moderation and wisdom in the use of victory won through civil strife are rarely given to individuals, almost never to parties. In our own case, when the Republican party undertook, as the phrase went, to "reconstruct" the South, it fairly overstepped the

bounds of moderation, and went to work to reorganize a thoroughly disorganized social, political, and industrial system on preconceived theories which were wholly at variance with actual facts. By more than accomplishing their own work, they thus made work for their opponents. Accordingly the party which had been so skilfully organized by the dominant South to be its faithful political ally, after fifteen years of demoralization and defeat found itself once more rising into prominence as the protector of a struggling and dominated South. Thus the presidential election of 1876 finds the deep ground-swell of the great rebellion storm only slowly subsiding. The blow is over and will not revive; the South is a wreck in pressing need of repairs, and to insure her getting them is the present work of the Democratic party, while it remains for the Republican party to see that in the process the great results of the war are not disturbed.

So far, therefore, as the momentous political issues of twenty years ago are concerned, little remains over which to struggle. During the present canvass issues, side-issues, and after-issues will, indeed, be manufactured out of it; sometimes by very honest and very dull men who, having once learned to talk on a certain subject, have no faculty of speech on any other; and sometimes by very cunning and unscrupulous men, who will work on the old passions and the old hatreds as long as they can possibly hope to get themselves into office, or to keep themselves there, by so doing. In all this, however, there is something very uninviting and even repulsive to men who look upon politics as anything more than an occupation, and upon office-holding as anything more than a means of support. The continued dwelling upon the last phases of a stale excitement is neither a philosophical nor an ennobling pursuit. It is small matter for wonder, therefore, that the number of those who act independently of all party affiliations is continually increasing. The wonder rather is that the majority still cling to the ruts. Meanwhile it is now proposed to discuss, as temperately as may be, the considerations likely to influence the former class either in voting or abstaining from voting in the present election.

It was the action of these men in holding a conference at

the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York, on the 15th of May, which constituted the first important act of the campaign, and in no small degree gave a character to it. Political conferences are always dangerous things to meddle with. Not infrequently they produce results directly opposite to what is desired by their originators. It was somewhat thus with that which gathered in New York in May upon the call of Mr. Schurz and his friends. The assemblage was large, miscellaneous, earnest, and intelligent. Made up of men who cared little for office and who were deeply dissatisfied with existing political conditions, it was apparent enough that circumstances might easily arise which would impel them to a united action. Nor in such case was it at all improbable that their action would exercise a decisive influence on the results of the campaign. The difficulty in their way arose from the fact that the men there gathered were thoroughly representative men,—that they actually had behind them a large constituency,—and they represented that constituency most directly in that they asserted a perfect independence of all party organizations. They were in fact a company of Independents; only, as such, they happened to be just as independent of each other as they were of the party “machines.” Accordingly they agreed only in negatives. They did not even attempt to suggest, much less did they think of laying down, any positive line of action. Indeed, hardly any two were there with the same purpose. Some desired to force the nomination of Mr. Bristow upon the Republican party; others that of Mr. Tilden on the Democrats. There was a general and determined feeling of hostility to Messrs. Blaine, Conkling, Morton, and Hendricks, which in case of their nomination wished to have everything prepared for an organized and emphatic opposition, independent if need be. This result, indeed, was by some secretly hoped for; though the majority undoubtedly stood ready to accept from either of the regular parties any nomination which carried with it a reasonable assurance of reform. The pressure it was sought to bring about was on the conventions at Cincinnati and St. Louis. Measures looking towards independent action were regarded with suspicion and simply as a last resort.

Having adopted a vigorous and ringing address, and appointed an executive committee to insure action in certain contingencies, the conference dispersed. The Independent Voters had retired to their homes, and now it remained for the party managers either to conciliate their support or drive them into a movement of their own. The two conventions were then held, and resulted, the one in the defeat of Mr. Blaine, and the other in the nomination of Governor Tilden. The result was in neither case all that the Independent Voters as a class could have desired, but, on the other hand, both parties had placed themselves in a position which made outside action practically impossible. In other words, the nominations made and the platforms adopted at St. Louis and at Cincinnati were in neither case the best, but in each case they were good enough. There was nothing from which an appeal could be taken to the country at large, with any prospect of success. They were, in a word, perfectly calculated to satisfy the average voter. Accordingly, no sooner were they announced than those who had met in the Fifth Avenue Hotel in May seemed in an agony of impatience to declare their adhesion to the one side or the other. In this respect they displayed only that lack of discipline and absence of leadership which is almost invariably the fatal defect in such attempted combinations. Could they have held together, or acted upon the party organizations with any degree of concentration, it can scarcely be doubted that before the campaign was over they could have forced their own issues to the front and dictated their own terms of adhesion. As it was, however, the instant the nominations were made the members of the conference resembled nothing so much as a group of discreetly clad clergymen caught out in a thunder-storm without any umbrellas. There was something absurdly ludicrous in the haste with which they got themselves under cover. The papers were full of their telegraphic despatches, and wherever two or three were gathered together an Independent was among them defining his position. Mr. Schurz speedily appeared with a manifesto on one side, and Mr. Godwin on the other; while the body of the Independent vote, which it had been the object of the conference to concentrate, found itself free to

make its own choice of candidates and platform, with only one thing absolutely certain, that in neither case were they wholly satisfactory, and that injudicious haste had rendered the action impossible through which alone an improvement could be compelled. Though any positive or united line of conduct has, therefore, ceased to be possible, the principles which may be expected to control the individual course of those who now hold themselves aloof from party lines are none the less worthy of consideration. The average politician to the contrary notwithstanding, there is a hereafter to every election. Whichever party succeeds in electing its candidates, the Independent Voter will have political duties of some sort to perform. In the first place, so far as the present campaign is concerned, he must make up his mind whether he will follow Mr. Schurz into the support of Governor Hayes, or Mr. Godwin into that of Governor Tilden; or whether he will, declining to support either candidate, quietly stay at home and abide the development of events, the course of which he can neither plainly discern nor greatly influence. Having decided this question for himself, it yet remains for him to have his mind clear as to the course it will be his duty to take, whichever party comes into power.

In considering these questions it is well in the first place to try to get a perfectly clear perception of the issues involved in the campaign. That he may do this it is absolutely necessary for an intelligent being to close his ears to the discussion generally carried on. In that, words supply to an altogether inordinate degree the place of ideas. Of the three elements, therefore, into which every campaign discussion may be decomposed,—rubbish, formalities, and essence,—it is here proposed to devote very few words except to the last. Under the head of campaign rubbish may, in the present case, safely be classed all the rambling discussion of the war records of the several candidates, and their opinions prior to the Rebellion or the Mexican War; also the charges and counter-charges made as to their transactions in mules, their stealing railroads, plundering widows and orphans, “dodging” taxes, issuing “shin-plaster” currency, the number of watches they own, and the date at which they may have purchased pianos. Personally all

the candidates are respectable gentlemen. They have passed their lives before the communities in which they live, and been honored and trusted. As to the views they may have entertained twenty years ago, it is to be remembered the War of the Rebellion closed in the year 1865. The issues at stake between the years 1848 and 1860 are now just as much settled beyond the peradventure of reversal as those involved in the War of 1812 or the Revolution. The records of Governor Hayes and of Governor Tilden anterior to 1861 have, therefore, sentiment apart, just about as much bearing on the living issues of this campaign as their opinions on the Hartford Convention or the Darwinian theory of evolution. No one can deny that the mass of trash and rubbish of this description — constituting, as it does, nine tenths of the campaign literature — has its influence. Unhappily, mud-flinging is to a very large class of mankind one of the more enjoyable features of every canvass ; and, as there are said to be German counties in Pennsylvania where votes are regularly at each election cast for General Jackson, so a not inconsiderable portion of the community now does, and for the next fifty years will, measure every candidate, not by his acts of the day, but by what he said or thought in 1860, or did or did not do during the Rebellion. Citizens of this description unquestionably cast votes, and it is only proper, therefore, that a fair proportion of the discussion of every campaign should be devoted to them. They are, however, not entitled to the whole of it.

Excluding, therefore, all these topics from consideration here, there yet remain the formalities of the campaign and its essence. Among the formalities should be classed the proceedings of the party conventions, including those meaningless arrays of platitudes which are regularly dignified by the name of platforms, and are supposed to beguile unthinking and inexperienced voters ; and in this class belong, also, those ponderous campaign speeches of the great party "statesmen," in which, at regular intervals, they define their own positions and demolish "the other man." In the essence of the campaign are the personal characters and surroundings of the several candidates, their letters of acceptance, and their party associations ; everything, in fact, which throws any reliable light upon

the probable tone of the incoming administration, the line of policy likely to be adopted by it, and its practical ability to carry that policy out.

And in the first place, as respects the formalities of the campaign. Certainly there is in the present case little enough either in the action of the conventions, the framing of the respective platforms, or the ponderous eloquence of the party "statesmen" to excite enthusiasm or to influence the calmer judgment. Estimated by their professions merely, there would seem to be absolutely no ground of choice between the parties. There has been nothing like the canvass in this respect since 1852, when Whigs and Democrats vied with each other in servility to the slave oligarchy. An intelligent foreigner, coming here now and reading the two platforms in order to get an idea of what the election hubbub was about, would assuredly be most reminded of Swift's "big-endians" and "little-endians." Throughout, the two declarations of principle are so curiously identical that, with one minor exception and the omission of the regular campaign denunciation, they might just as well be exchanged and each party accept the other. Especially is this the case in regard to what are called the great results of the war. One party insists on their unconditional acceptance, and the other party accepts them unconditionally.*

* In support of the correctness of this proposition, the declarations contained in the two platforms on the prominent issues involved in the canvass are set forth below in parallel columns. In view of the savage denunciation for utter political profligacy in which partisan organs have indulged towards those who professed themselves ready to act with either party which put certain men in nomination, these extracts supply a good deal of food for reflection.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

Republican Platform.

"The power to provide for the enforcement of the principles embodied in the recent constitutional amendments is vested by those amendments in the Congress of the United States; and we declare it to be the solemn obligation of the legislative and executive departments of the government to put into immediate and vigorous exercise all their constitutional powers for removing any just cause of discontent on the part of

Democratic Platform.

"We do here reaffirm our faith in the permanence of the Federal Union, our devotion to the Constitution of the United States, with its amendments universally accepted as a final settlement of the controversies that engendered civil war."

["If the duty shall be assigned to me, I should not fail to exercise the powers with which the laws and Constitution of our country clothe its chief magistrate, to pro-

So far as words count for anything, therefore, there is not on this last point a hair's breadth of difference between the parties, and the issue becomes merely the practical one,—Under which organization in power will the wounds caused by the war soonest close? Of course those whose whole political

any class, and for securing to every American citizen complete liberty and exact equality in the exercise of all civil, political, and public rights."

tect all its citizens, whatever their former condition, in every political and personal right." — *Governor Tilden's Letter.*]

SPECIE PAYMENTS.

Republican Platform.

"In the first act of Congress signed by President Grant, the national government assumed to remove any doubts of its purpose to discharge all just obligations to the public creditors, and 'solemnly pledged its faith to make provision, at the earliest practicable period, for the redemption of the United States notes in coin.' Commercial prosperity, public morals, and national credit demand that this promise be fulfilled by a continuous and steady progress to specie payment."

[A motion pledging the party to the Resumption Act of January, 1875, was rejected on a *viva voce* vote, without a count.]

Democratic Platform.

"We denounce the failure, for all these eleven years of peace, to make good the promise of the legal-tender notes, which are a changing standard of value in the hands of the people, and the nonpayment of which is a disregard of the plighted faith of the nation.

"We denounce the financial imbecility and immorality of that party which, during eleven years of peace, has made no advance towards resumption, . . . and, while annually professing to intend a speedy return to specie payments, has annually enacted fresh hindrances thereto. As such hindrance we denounce the resumption clause of the act of 1875, and we here demand its repeal."

CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM.

Republican Platform.

"The best interest of the public service demands . . . that senators and representatives, who may be judges and accusers, should not dictate appointments to office. The invariable rule in appointments should have reference to the honesty, fidelity, and capacity of the appointees."

Democratic Platform.

"Experience proves that efficient, economical conduct of the governmental business is not possible if its civil service be subject to change at every election, be a prize fought for at the ballot-box, be a brief reward of party zeal, instead of posts of honor assigned for proved competency and held for fidelity in the public employ; that the dispensing of patronage should neither be a tax upon the time of all our public men, nor the instrument of their ambition."

On certain other points, which must, in the eyes at least of embodied party wisdom in convention assembled, be of great public moment, if we may judge from the prominence always given them, the resemblance of sentiments would be enough to convict an author of plagiarism.

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS.

Republican Platform.

"The pledges which the nation has given to her soldiers and sailors must be fulfilled,

Democratic Platform.

"The soldiers and sailors of the Republic, and the widows and orphans of those

stock in trade lies in stimulating sectional hate and in repeating the noisy watchwords of the war — the Boutwells, the Logans, and the Mortons — will insist to the end of this century, and, should they live so long, to the end of the next, that it will always be an act of madness to trust the great results of the war in any hands but their own. Some weight, however, ought in reason to be given to practical experience in coming to a conclusion on this point; and practical experience teaches a very different lesson. It is an indisputable fact that peace and quiet and good-will between the races has been restored in the South exactly in proportion as the States formerly in rebellion have passed into Democratic hands; hatred, outrage, and the dreaded color line have been perpetuated exactly in the degree that the administration at Washington has succeeded in bolstering up the "reconstructed" State governments. Judging by the experience of the last eight years, it would seem that the one great boon the sensible negro at the South should pray for would be to be let alone by his "pro-

and a grateful people will always hold those who imperilled their lives for the country's preservation in the kindest remembrance."

who have fallen in battle, have a just claim on the care, protection, and gratitude of their fellow-citizens."

RAILROAD LAND-GRANTS.

Republican Platform.

"We reaffirm our opposition to further grants of the public lands to corporations and monopolies, and demand that the national domain be devoted to free homes for the people."

Democratic Platform.

"Reform is necessary to put a stop to the profligate waste of public lands, and their diversion from actual settlers by the party in power, which has squandered two hundred millions of acres upon railroads alone."

It is useless, however, to extend this curious collection of "principles." The real distinction seems to come down to this, — the leaders of both parties confess to a close similarity of sentiments, but the Republican leaders assert that the Democrats *will* not carry out their professions; to which the Democrats, with some force, reply, that the Republicans *have* not carried out theirs. But it is when the Republicans "charge the Democrats" with "treason," with "repudiation," with "imbecility," with "incompetence," and solemnly warn "the country against trusting a party thus alike unworthy, recreant, and incapable"; and when the Democrats "denounce" the Republicans for "improvidence," "financial imbecility and immorality," "profligacy," and divers other more especially enumerated "abuses, wrongs, and crimes," — it is then, in the utter demolition of "the other man," that the fight waxes hot, and the lines of demarcation are sharply drawn. It is all very funny in its way, and irresistibly suggestive of the famous Eatonswill election, and the tremendous controversies between Mr. Pott of the "Gazette," and Mr. Slurk of the "Independent."

tectors" at Washington, — to be allowed to assume, as quietly and speedily as he can, those natural relations to which, in spite of everything, he must at last come with the community in which his lot is cast. Certainly, wherever this has taken place his position and prospects are infinitely preferable to what they are confessed to be where it has not taken place. During eight long years the United States government has meddled and muddled in the affairs of South Carolina and Mississippi and Louisiana, with results over which the least judicious cannot but grieve. It is now nearly as long since it lost all practical power to interfere in Virginia, in North Carolina, and in Georgia; and now could Mr. Morton or Mr. Boutwell or Mr. Logan even pretend to assert that the condition of affairs as respects the colored race is better in South Carolina than in North Carolina, or in Louisiana than in Arkansas? The usual reply to this argument is, not a denial, but a gloomy reference to the order which reigns in Arkansas as compared with that for which Warsaw was once renowned. The question, however, for reasonable men to decide, is not whether the existing condition of affairs is perfect, — that we know it neither is nor, under the existing condition of affairs, can be, — but is it better in North Carolina than in South Carolina, in Arkansas than in Louisiana? The answer does not admit of doubt. When, therefore, the Independent Voter is told that he must vote for Governor Hayes lest perchance the existing condition of affairs in South Carolina and in Louisiana may not be perpetuated for yet another four years, and those States may become even as North Carolina and Arkansas, it may fairly be asked whether he is not justified in regarding such an argument as an insult to his intelligence. So far, therefore, as the condition of the South is concerned, the less the leaders of the Republican party have to say on the subject, except in the form of appeals to passion, hatred, and prejudice, the better. With their impotent system of protection which did not protect, and of meddling which only aggravated prejudice, they have themselves during the last six years been the most dangerous enemies the freedmen have had. The argument on this issue is overwhelmingly in favor of that organization which can set up Virginia against Louisiana and Georgia against South Carolina.

Practically, however, though exercising an immense influence on its result, this question is not at issue in the present canvass. Whichever party gains the ascendancy, the South will in the future be left to work out its own destiny undisturbed by national interference. The Republican leaders have small desire to repeat the blunders of Louisiana, and Mr. Boutwell's proposal to remand Mississippi into a territorial condition stands not much better chance of adoption than would a counter proposal from Mr. Ben. Hill to take the same course towards Massachusetts. The Southern question in its present phase is consequently doing duty in the canvass as a powerful and well-understood campaign tonic, — a species of "Plantation Bitters," calculated to revive a flagging public interest. Abandoning the further discussion of it, therefore, to those by whom it is prescribed, it remains here to consider the formal attitude of the two parties on the questions practically at issue in the immediate political future of the country.

There are three great phases into which all political movement resolves itself, — the revolutionary, the constructive, and the administrative; and these three also necessarily succeed each other in the order in which they have been named. Within the last sixteen years it is apparent that this country has passed through two, and the more momentous two, of these phases, and is now entering upon the third. The period between 1861 and 1865 was one of unquestioned revolution; that since 1865 has been one of construction, which, well or ill done, will be complete as soon as South Carolina and Louisiana are permitted to reach the position of rest towards which they are irresistibly tending. That time cannot long be deferred. Meanwhile, naturally enough, as the special work of each period taxed all the energies and absorbed all the attention of the country, its administration fell into greater and ever greater abuses. At last, during the first administration of President Grant, the abuses which had gradually crept into the currency, the tariff, and the civil service began to excite the public attention. After the tremendous issues and excitements of the war, however, these purely administrative questions seemed almost trivial. Large bodies, also, move slowly, and for a time the great mass of voters went quietly and

smoothly along in the old established party ruts. It was only necessary for the leaders to raise the familiar slogan, and at once the clan was all excitement; while, for the rest, a well-rounded platform declaration answered every purpose. This state of affairs cannot, however, last forever. A period during which questions of administration only will be at issue and engage public attention in this country is, in the natural order of things, near at hand. The time must soon come when a formal enunciation of platitudes by party conventions will cease to be accepted in lieu of the faithful observance of pledges of administrative reforms. The progress of the canvass now going on,—the emphatic summoning of the war issues to the front and the relegation of the new issues to the rear,—the suspicious prominence of the vagabond element in party control, and the loud and ominous creaking of the two political “machines” as they grind out a result,—the success with which the political Bourbons have again succeeded in distracting the public attention from the abuses of the present by reviving the passions of the past,—all these unmistakable indications show that the time has not yet come. To hasten its arrival would seem to be the object the Independent Voter should have most at heart. That he may contribute to that end he must, in the first place, so far as in him lies, hold parties to a rigid and absolute adherence to their professions; and when they fall short of those professions, he must do what he can to defeat them, regardless of consequences. If he is not prepared for this, he may as well at once acknowledge his political impotence and satisfy himself with a constant perusal of his Bible.

Apart from the condition of the South, which has already been sufficiently referred to, there are at this time three living questions before the country: these are the matters of reforming the civil service, the currency, and the tariff. Among the Independent Voters there are those who give the palm as respects importance to each of these issues, and to each of them the conventions addressed themselves. So far as the formal utterances contained in the platforms are concerned, it is not too much to say that, judging by the experience of the past, no observing man will attach the slightest weight

to them. Take the clauses in the Republican platform, for instance, relating to the currency or civil-service issues, and compare them with the expressions on the same subjects contained in the platforms of the same party four and eight years ago. They are certainly no stronger; they assuredly offer no new guaranties. As respects the Republican party, the case needs but to be stated. With an assurance which would be comical were it not insulting, that party which, throughout six of the last eight years, has had complete and absolute control of every branch of the government, and during that time has not made even a decent pretence of carrying out its solemn pledges, now comes forward and unblushingly asks to be intrusted with a new lease of power on the strength of more pledges. Neither can the party lay its shortcomings as respects the currency and the civil service at the door of the President. It was the party, — the party leaders, — and not the President, who was responsible there. It was the Republican Congress which, in the face of its party pledges, passed a bill to inflate in time of peace a fraudulent paper currency; and it was that same Congress which contemptuously broke down its President's single weak attempt at civil-service reform. And, after doing this, the party convention puts forward a claim to be retained in office on the ground that it has nominated a new man to succeed President Grant, and that, though it fulfils no pledges, its "tendencies" and "impulses" are good! Twice in eight years has it dealt in noble professions; continuously through those years has it mockingly refused to make them good; and now when it proffers them again — *credat Judæus Apella!*

Neither is it much better with the Democrats. On one of the three living issues, that of the tariff, they certainly promise better than the Republicans, who in that respect are simply hopeless. Thoroughly believing in the Chinese system, no inroad into the outrages and absurdities of protection can be hoped for from that quarter. It is not easy, therefore, to see how any person who gives a prominence to free-trade among the living issues of the day can vote a Republican ticket. As to the Democrats, they promise well, but can they be relied on to make their promises good? Judging by the wretched fate

of the admirable tariff measure introduced into the House by the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means during the last session of Congress, they cannot. So, also, on the currency and on the question of civil-service reform. Democratic platform promises can be had to order and in quantity to satisfy the most eager ; but as for performance, the votes of the Democratic House of Representatives and its action as respected its officers were not reassuring.

It is, however, hardly better worth while to waste time over empty political formalities than over unadulterated rubbish. Declarations of principles adopted by Presidential conventions are not intended by those who frame them to express intentions, and should not be so construed ; they indicate "tendencies" and "impulses." The profound indifference with which the platforms adopted at Cincinnati and St. Louis were received by the outside world afforded excellent evidence that this fact was generally appreciated. The lessons of the last eight years were not wholly forgotten. Passing on then to the essence of the campaign, the candidates are first to be considered.

In this respect unquestionably the *prima facie* advantage is with the Democrats. If there is one thing wholly opposed to the spirit of our institutions and the earlier and better usages of the country, it is the political trick of nominating unknown and untried men, on the ground that, being unknown and untried, they have no "record" to defend. Every voter is thus left free to imagine what he pleases, and, of course, *omne ignotum*, etc. In such a matter as this, it is best, perhaps, to try to see ourselves as we would see others, and as others must see us. As practical men, priding ourselves on our capacity for self-government, what would we Americans say if we saw, for instance, the Liberal party of England, on a defeat of the Disraeli Ministry and a dissolution of Parliament, select as their candidate for Premier, not Gladstone, not Forster, not any well-known or experienced leader, but some unknown, untried Lord Lieutenant of Canada, who had been a colonel in the Sepoy insurrection, and a silent member during one short Parliament ? In the days of Washington and Jefferson and Madison we should have smiled, not without just pride, and

remarked that, republicans though we were, we at least did not make a farce of our government. Yet this is exactly what was done by the Republican party in the case of Governor Hayes. Of that gentleman all that is known is to his credit; he seems to have been a gallant and meritorious officer during the war; a faithful though uninfluential member of Congress after its close; and more recently a respectable, though not brilliant, governor of Ohio. Since his nomination, the verdict of those most intimately acquainted with him has been decidedly in his favor, and they have joined in warmly recommending him for the Presidency. All this, however, ill supplies the place of long public service. To fill the Presidential chair with success a man must have a great deal more than those good purposes, fair talents, and high character which serve to make him locally respectable. He must have judgment, firmness, insight, and, above all, experience in a much more than ordinary degree; and that he has these is only shown by trial. Even the most enthusiastic supporters of Governor Hayes can hardly, as yet, claim that his election would be anything more than a political experiment; more of an experiment than the election of James K. Polk in 1844, for he had at least been nationally prominent as chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, as Speaker of the national House of Representatives, and as governor of Tennessee before he became a Presidential candidate. Governor Hayes's nomination, so far as the previous reputation of the candidate is concerned, is just about on a level with the nomination of Pierce by the Democrats, in 1852, or that of Fremont by the Republicans, in 1856; and it is infinitely below that of Lincoln by the Republicans, in 1860, for he had brilliantly sustained himself through the most trying canvass in the history of the country against the ablest and most unscrupulous of all the Democratic leaders. It is, therefore, difficult to see why Governor Hayes does not fall within that class of candidates who were so well pictured in the address adopted by the Fifth Avenue Hotel conference, as candidates whom Independent Voters could *not* support; men "who, however favorably judged by their nearest friends, are not publicly known to possess those qualities of mind and character which the stern task of genuine reform

requires ; for the American people cannot now afford to risk the future of the Republic in experiments on merely supposed virtue or rumored ability, to be trusted on the strength of private recommendations."

The Democrats, on the other hand, whatever may be thought of the men, unquestionably have put in nomination candidates both of whom were among their most prominent party leaders, — men with whom and whose records the whole country was thoroughly familiar. That, on certain essential issues, and especially that of the currency, these two leaders were at variance is indisputable, but this merely proved that they were party leaders, and all who considered such variance a good ground for refusing to support the ticket had full notice of the fact, and could shape their course accordingly. Good or bad, the candidates were tried men, and the whole country knew how to measure them ; the appeal was to facts, not to fancy ; to the record, not to the imagination. And this is the only sound practice. In so far, therefore, the Democratic party has in this campaign approached much more nearly than its opponents to a correct usage ; its record may be bad or otherwise, but it has at least nominated the most distinguished reformer in its ranks.

Passing from the individual candidates, it is now necessary to consider the letters in which they accepted the nominations. For, recognizing as if by common consent the utter contempt into which convention platforms have fallen, each candidate went to work at once to form a platform of his own, upon which, and which only, it was universally understood he would be expected to stand. These letters of acceptance were also received by the public as alone setting forth the distinctive issues of the campaign. Of the letter of Governor Hayes it may fairly be said that it was in every respect more satisfactory, far more manly, honest, and outspoken, than the platform of the convention which nominated him. It breathed, indeed, a refreshing atmosphere of frankness and almost of ingenuousness. On the other hand, to those who have heard and read of the dark ways of American politics, this very honest freshness of tone is suggestive of some unpleasant doubts. And here is the difficulty in substituting a letter for a record of trial. Any in-

genuous boy can write a letter full of high purpose ; but to carry out that purpose in the Presidential chair requires a full-grown, stalwart man. For reasons presently to be shown, Governor Hayes's letter seems more calculated to inspire in the mind of the Independent Voter a belief in the good intentions of the writer, than a faith in his knowledge of men or his practical acquaintance with the difficulties of the position he may be called upon to assume. In other words, in reading his letter the mind instinctively goes beyond the programme laid down in it, to dwell upon the circumstances under which the writer must try to carry that programme out.

If elected President of the United States, Governor Hayes will not be, as many seem to suppose, an autocrat ruling the nation through four years by his own supreme will, but a chief executive officer merely, with very limited powers, who must look somewhere for support, if his administration is not to result in ignominious failure. Now Governor Hayes's letter was to the last degree outspoken in two respects: first, as regards a radical reform in the civil service, and, secondly, on the question of a return to specie payments. Upon each of these issues he went far in advance of the stereotyped and intentionally meaningless phrases which had long, to the grim delight of the party leaders, done harmless platform service, and placed himself directly on the line of the most pronounced reformers. Indeed, so outspoken was he that it has been more than once publicly suggested that the portions of his letter relating to these two issues were inspired, if not directly written, by Mr. Schurz. Be this the case or not, the question yet remains whether the man who, as candidate for the Presidency, wrote, or adopted in his letter of acceptance, the language referred to, can appreciate the circumstances by which, in case of his election, he must be surrounded. Facts are proverbially stubborn things. A President has got to encounter them, and must measure his language accordingly. If he does not so measure it, he will probably find in the end that it is not the facts which suffer. Now, what are a few of the probable facts of President Hayes's administration ?

First, as respects the currency. An act of Congress passed in January, 1875, provides for a resumption of specie payments

at the United States treasury on the first day of January, 1879. If Governor Hayes is elected President, his first Congress will meet in December, 1877, — less than thirteen months before the process of resumption is to begin. In his letter of acceptance Governor Hayes gallantly says: "I regard all the laws of the United States relating to the payment of the public indebtedness, the legal tender notes included, as constituting a pledge and moral obligation of the government, which must in good faith be kept. . . . If elected, I shall approve every appropriate measure to accomplish the desired end, and shall oppose any step backward"; — thus fully committing himself to carry out to the letter the provisions of the act of 1875. This was certainly most creditable to Governor Hayes's heart; but how does it speak for his head? Is it possible that any man competent not to occupy but to fill the Presidential chair can believe that the long and cautious process absolutely essential to a quiet resumption of specie payments in this country can be compressed into the brief space of thirteen months? It involves, somehow or other, a very considerable contraction of a much-inflated currency, a very considerable accumulation of gold, and consequent disturbance of exchanges and values. At least it involves all these, unless previous experience is wholly at fault. Can all this be accomplished in thirteen months, even though a thoroughly docile Congress seconds the exertions of an earnest President? That when the act of 1875 was passed, specie payments might have been resumed by this country, to its own great relief, by January, 1879, or even before that date, no student of financial questions for a moment doubts. But neither does any such student doubt that long and cautious preparation will be found an essential preliminary to resumption, whether it is to take place on the 1st of January, 1879, or any other day. A quiet and easy resumption is a port into which this country is destined neither to drift nor to drive; it has got patiently to beat there, in the face of wind and tide. That the United States, by the act of its constituted authorities, is pledged to pay its notes in specie on the 1st day of January, 1879, is indisputable; that not to fulfil the pledge will be a discreditable act of semi-repudiation is no less true than mortifying; and that,

for this humiliating condition of affairs, the party which nominated Governor Hayes is responsible, is most undeniable of all. It was that party, in full and unchecked control of the government in all its branches which passed the Resumption Act of 1875, and refused even to consider the supplementary legislation which could alone make that act effective. Before Governor Hayes so implicitly pledged himself to carry out the provisions of the Resumption Act, would it not have been wise for him to consider whether the time in which it was possible to do so had not already passed? Should he not in common prudence, while announcing himself as opposed to any step backward, have insisted on the early passage of the legislation necessary to make resumption possible, and declared that the day for resumption should be deferred with his consent only after an honest effort to resume had at least been made and failed? As it is, Governor Hayes has pledged himself to ignore facts. He has placed himself in an apparently impossible situation, from which he will have to recede; he has pledged himself to the act of resumption at a near date, instead of to the means by which resumption is to be made possible at any date. He has thus got himself into a false position to begin with, from which nothing but almost a miracle of good luck can save him. The Senate may, in case of his election, good-naturedly relieve him by passing the House bill repealing the date fixed for resumption, before his accession to office; but unless they do this, the chances are heavy that one of President Hayes's early acts will be to affix his signature to a measure repealing or at least deferring that date to which he now stands so explicitly committed.

So also as respects a reform of the civil service. Far be it from any reflecting citizen of the Republic to deny that the present national system of civil service is a disgrace. Founded as it is upon the principle that the national offices constitute, not a sacred trust, but a rich mass of plunder, the prospect of securing which will incite opposing factions to use their utmost exertions, it has become a standing peril to our institutions. The work of reforming a corrupt system which has been in use now for fifty years, and to which every bad and active element in the country is thoroughly wedded, is no trifling task. On

this point, however, something must be said at greater length in another part of this paper. In the present connection it can receive no justice. Recognizing the magnitude of this evil, however, every intelligent voter must respond to those portions of Governor Hayes's letter of acceptance in which he says that it is the question of "paramount interest" that "at first the President, either directly or through the heads of departments, made all the appointments, but gradually the appointing power, in many cases, passed into the control of members of Congress. The offices in these cases have become not merely rewards for party services, but rewards for services to party leaders. This system . . . is felt, I am confident, by a large majority of the members of Congress, to be an intolerable burden and an unwarrantable hindrance to the proper discharge of their legitimate duties. It ought to be abolished. The reform should be thorough, radical, and complete. . . . If elected, I shall conduct the administration of the government on these principles, and all constitutional powers vested in the executive will be employed to establish this reform."

Yet brave as these words are, they cannot but suggest to any one not wholly ignorant of our political system and its workings grave doubts as to the practical capacity of the candidate who wrote them. They are so very ingenuous! They seem to evince such a painfully simple faith that Messrs. Cameron and Conkling and Morton and Blaine and Howe and Sherman and Logan will at once see the matter in its correct light, and will gently and submissively accept the situation; yielding their dearly prized patronage, for the pure love of reform, without a murmur, much less a thought of resistance! It may be so; but if it is, then will the Afric indeed have changed his skin and the leopard his spots!

A thorough and correct appreciation of circumstances and an accurate adjustment of means to end is generally looked upon as a first essential to human success. Don Quixote performed, perhaps, a very gallant feat of arms when he ran a tilt with the windmill; but he came out of his tournament badly damaged none the less. It is surely to be supposed that Governor Hayes appreciates the fact that, if he is elected President of the United States, his powers as such will be limited,

and his administration can be saved from lamentable and utter failure only through the hearty and united support of some organized party. No President in this country can carry on an administration to suit himself on sentimental or guerilla or Ishmaelite principles. He has got to have a party behind him, or fail. Not only this. Common-sense, as well as political usage and party courtesy, always dictates to the President elect who are to be his confidential advisers and whom he can look to for effective support. These are, in the first place, his unsuccessful competitors in the nominating convention; and, in the second place, those who brought about his nomination and subsequent election. Not only does this usage exist in our political system, but it is a sound one. Through it alone can a responsible, in place of a personal, administration be secured. President Grant, looking upon his Cabinet as a sort of civic staff, ignored the usage, picking up his heads of departments as he met men he fancied in the cars, at dinner-tables, or in the club-rooms; and the result became known as "Grantism." Lincoln always recognized it, and it saved his administration. In the early days of the Republic no President thought of disregarding it. In the case of Governor Hayes, who are the advisers thus designated to him in advance? His chief competitor in the convention was Mr. Blaine; his rivals, who secured his nomination over Secretary Bristow, were Messrs. Morton and Conkling. Senator Sherman from Ohio first named him prominently as a candidate; Secretary Cameron manipulated the Pennsylvania delegation in his favor at the decisive moment; and Secretary Chandler is the head of the national executive committee which is organizing the campaign for his election. Under these circumstances, how is President Hayes to form a Cabinet in sympathy with his views as respects the civil service? Upon his inauguration he will find Messrs. Cameron and Chandler holding from his predecessor the portfolios of War and of the Interior. No names in the country are perhaps so thoroughly identified with the idea of a debauched, "machine" civil service as those of Cameron and Chandler. The first is own son to his father; and the last has always delighted in heaping his coarse and clumsy ridicule on every suggestion of civil-service reform. These two prominent

contributors to his election President Hayes must unceremoniously eject from the Cabinet or his professions will assume a very hollow sound. Having disposed of them, who is to be his Secretary of State? If usage is to be observed, it must be Mr. Blaine. But the name of Blaine is at the present time very far from being pleasantly associated in the minds of conscientious reformers. To put it very mildly, his nomination as Secretary of State would fail to inspire confidence. Nor is the case any better as respects Messrs. Conkling and Morton, Governor Hayes's other competitors. Their entrance into the Cabinet could and would receive but one interpretation. Yet these are the party chieftains without whose active support in the Senate President Hayes's administration must be from its very inception a foregone failure. He cannot ignore them without destroying his party; he cannot be guided by them without tacitly abandoning all his brave professions. Yet the issue is one he has got to meet on the threshold of the White House. Frankness is not always wisdom; honesty is not always identical with capacity. Mr. Bristow had been tried and had a record; no declarations from him would have been needed. The country knew what he could do. Governor Hayes promises well, but he has not been tried, and he seems somewhat disposed to ignore stubborn facts. The proof of the — But, as Hamlet remarked, "the proverb is something musty."

The same ingenuous simplicity which has been referred to in connection with other portions of his letter shone out in the self-denying ordnance at its close, as respects a re-election. It was simply puerile. If Governor Hayes does not know, he should know, that if he proves but in a small degree the man his friends claim him to be, if he carries out but in part the great reforms he suggests, his re-election for a second term will be a matter of such transcendent public consequence, that no pledge he could now give would or should for an instant stand in the way. In fact, there is something about this whole proposition for disqualifying Presidents from re-election which to a reflecting man is thoroughly exasperating. What, again, would the American people say of a European community which, after a short fixed period of administration, forever disqualified its Gladstones and Disraelis

and Thiers and McMahons and Bismarcks and Cavours and Nesselrodes,—turned their most experienced servants neck and heels out of the direction of public affairs at just the time they had proved themselves qualified for it?—and that, too, on the avowed ground that public and private virtue were so weak that those whom the people chose could not be trusted with power, lest they should abuse it to their private ends! Undoubtedly we should say that such a people made a farce of government, and were only fit to live under the effete sway of an hereditary ruler. In the present campaign both candidates give countenance to this childish expedient to secure reform, and Governor Tilden even goes so far as to suggest a constitutional disqualification. He fails, however, to explain why he limits his reform to the Presidency. He is now governor of a great State, and as such disposes of a large amount of patronage. He or his successors may use it to secure a re-election. Would it not be well, therefore, while about it, to institute a wider reform, and to solemnly disqualify for re-election every executive officer in the Union, down to the village mayors? This, at least, would lay the axe at the root of the evil. It is such contemptible tinkering as this which brings the whole system of written constitutions into contempt. It is suggestive of nothing so much as of trying to extinguish a first-class conflagration by squirting on it with a syringe. If the political virtue of our community and our public men has indeed fallen to so low an ebb that disqualification has become necessary to prevent a breach of trust, then the end is not far off, and the depriving ourselves of the power to re-elect a Washington, a Madison, or a Lincoln will not help us much. Governor Hayes probably meant all that he said in his letter on this subject; as to Governor Tilden, he, doubtless, reiterated the jargon in another form, not without some sense of shame, and simply because his opponent had set the bad example.

If the marked peculiarity of Governor Hayes's letter was its simple directness of tone, Governor Tilden's was chiefly noticeable for its extremely labored character. It plainly showed throughout that the writer felt himself placed by the circumstances of his nomination in a false position, from which he was trying to extricate himself, and with no very marked

success. His position was indeed a false one. The currency question and administrative reform are Governor Tilden's two battle-horses, and as regards both the action of the St. Louis Convention greatly aggravated his difficulties. In the first place, the Convention had insisted on denouncing the Specie Resumption Act of January, 1875, as a fraud, and demanded its repeal. As governor of New York Mr. Tilden had, however, distinctly identified himself with the Specie Resumption Act, and had gone out of his way to cause it to be re-enacted by the State Legislature. Consequently, however much others might denounce that law as a sham and a fraud, it did not lie in his mouth to do so. The act was not only denounced, but its repeal was demanded, and, so far as the Democratic House of Representatives was concerned, obtained ; thus going as far as the party then could to establish the principle that in America there is no such thing as a national faith which all parties respect, but that the nation's pledge is binding only so long as the party in control of the government at the time it is given remains in power. A more humiliating experience for a Presidential candidate would not have been easy to imagine. Not only did Governor Tilden have to renounce his record before he began his campaign, but he did it very awkwardly. He might well, it would seem, have declared his adherence to every position he had assumed, and again insisted that a resumption of specie payments in January, 1879, had been perfectly feasible in January, 1875, though it had wholly ceased to be so in July, 1876 ; and that the national disgrace and long-continued business depression involved in the repeal of the Resumption Act belonged, not to him nor to the Democratic party, but to that other party, which, though in power, had named only a day for resumption, and had then wantonly and ignorantly refused to make any preparation to meet that day. In reluctantly assenting to the repeal of the date of resumption, he did, therefore, but recognize and bow to that inevitable necessity for which his opponents only were responsible. This would all have been perfectly true and thoroughly tenable. But this position Governor Tilden did not take. To the thorough believer in hard currency his letter was at once most entertaining and most reassuring reading. It was so,

however, from the fact that it contained a body of most admirable doctrine at great length, and yet the writer never once distinctly said what he meant. In this respect his utterances were the exact counterpart to those of Governor Hayes. He showed by what he said that he understood his subject, and by what he did not say that he fully appreciated the difficult circumstances by which the end he had in view was surrounded. Accordingly he preached contraction at great length, and never once named it; he strongly advocated resumption, but denied that it was necessary to fix any day for it. He quietly ignored his own record on the act of January, 1875, and, while he certainly did not greatly conciliate the inflation and paper-money element of the West, he succeeded in alienating a very considerable portion of the hard-money sentiment of the East.

Notwithstanding all this, however, it would be very difficult for any well-informed man to read Governor Tilden's letter of acceptance, or his earlier official utterances on the subject of the currency, without being satisfied that he is thoroughly master of it. He is by nature a financier, and a strong one. Unless the record of his life belies him, it is not unsafe to predict that if elected President he will practically be his own Secretary of the Treasury, and a successful return to specie payments will be the one great aim and monument of his administration. There is, also, another side to this question worthy of the careful consideration of those who believe that a return to specie payments is the one thing now needful to an early and complete restoration of national prosperity. The great obstacles in the way of that result have hitherto been an utter lukewarmness on the part of the Republican party and the dead opposition of the Democrats. To bring the thing about, therefore, not only has the Democratic opposition got to be neutralized, but a real life must be infused into the Republican support. If it did nothing else, the election of Tilden would spike the whole inflationist battery; for, through him, the friends of a sound currency could and would take possession of the Democratic organization, and through its agency could spur the Republicans up to something remotely resembling a fulfilment of their pledges. For the last eight

years each party on this subject has tried to make its record as little objectionable as possible to the paper-money element, — the Democrats promising everything that was bad, and the Republicans doing nothing that was good. It is very hard to see how matters in this respect would be bettered by Governor Hayes's election. He, certainly, by himself and through his Secretary, could do no more than has been done by President Grant and Secretary Bristow. He would apparently meet in Congress the same negative support and the same positive opposition. The presence of a hard-money Democrat in the Presidential chair would, however, at once destroy this equilibrium of forces. Unless a Republican opposition was utterly wanting to every pledge, it would have to oppose any specie-resumption measures proposed by President Tilden on the ground, not that they went too far, but that they did not go far enough. This would at once change the character of the struggle. The bidding would tend upwards instead of downwards. Then at last something might be hoped for.

The currency question is, however, one comparatively easy of solution. The country has been through that experience many times before, and, like certain forms of physical disease, it is disfiguring, weakening, and painful, but it never kills; somehow or other we always struggled through before, and we shall do so now. The civil-service issue is, however, quite another matter. That, as an attempt will presently be made to show, is unsettling the very foundations of the government, and on that the position of Governor Tilden and his supporters is far from an ideal one. Governor Tilden, it is true, has sought especially to identify himself with the popular demand for administrative reform, and to-day in the public mind he personifies it to a very considerable extent. Nevertheless, what reason is there to suppose that Governor Tilden even knows what administrative reform is? Does he not confound it with thief-catching and ring-smashing? These are, it is true, very admirable occupations in their way, and that Governor Tilden has achieved remarkable results in them will be denied by no one who will take the trouble to read the article entitled "An Episode in Municipal Government" in the present number of this Review. Nevertheless, though the

requirements and consequent usages of the last few years have carried us very far in that direction, it may yet be questioned whether the qualities of a chief of police are exactly the qualities which would be most strongly developed in an ideal President of the United States. It cannot be too freshly borne in mind that a reform of the civil service to be worth anything means a return to the earlier and better usages of the Republic,—to the system in vogue before Andrew Jackson debauched it,—to the time when the word “patronage” conveyed no idea of plunder, and men held office under the government in the same way they now hold it in banks or insurance companies. Does Governor Tilden, when he talks of administrative reform, mean this? Does the party behind him mean it? Are they really prepared to cut down and eradicate, root and branch, the atrocious spoils system originated by their great idol, President Jackson? Or, instead of this, does Governor Tilden mean a vigorous system of thief-catching and ring-smashing under and supplementary to the spoils system? That he should mean a thorough, radical, genuine reform seems scarcely possible; and it is ludicrously evident that his associate on the ticket, Governor Hendricks, means nothing of the sort. That gentleman is perfectly willing to talk of civil-service reform, but he premises that, before entering upon it, “no man shall be retained [in office], on any consideration, . . . who has furnished money to corrupt the elections.” As this convenient test would, under the present system, notoriously cover all existing office-holders who have been “assessed,”—and who among them has not been?—one more “clean sweep” appears to be in Governor Hendricks’s mind a necessary preliminary to the work of reform; which seems to be very much the system which President Jackson inaugurated.

In attempting to forecast his probable action on this subject, it cannot be forgotten that Governor Tilden has passed his life in the most thoroughly corrupt political atmosphere in the New World; that he is a Democrat dyed in the wool, and that, since the days of its origin, no one good or honest thought or act respecting the civil service has ever come out of the Democratic party. To reward partisans, and to catch them if they stole,

has been the highest level as respects the use of public office to which that organization has ever risen. Is there any good ground on which to rest a confident belief that either party or candidate has now at last risen to a higher level than this ?

It is, however, the very doubt, or rather the absence of all doubt on this point, which brings the reflecting Independent Voter to the very heart of the issue in the present canvass. As respects a radical reform of the civil service, there is no ground to hope that the question is yet ripe for solution, and matters must apparently be a great deal worse before they can be materially better. In what respect are the Republicans better than the Democrats ? True, they did not introduce the vile system, but they were apt pupils ; nor has the country witnessed a greedier or more disgusting scramble for office than took place when the " party of reform " came into power in 1861. Since then they have only not completely sacked their own camp. The truth is, neither party is in the least degree sound on this question ; nor have the party leaders on either side the slightest intention of making thorough work of it. The country is not educated up to it, and does not yet demand it ; and until it is educated up to it, and does demand it, the thing will not be done. Under these circumstances, the very worst which could happen would be just such a half-way measure of reform as Governor Hayes might, by his utmost effort, succeed in exacting from an unwilling party,—that wretched degree of reform which just neutralizes action by making a radically bad system externally endurable.

It was Horace Mann who one day exclaimed, in despair over the slowness of the educational movement, " The fact is that I am in a hurry, and God Almighty is n't ! " The great difficulty with the civil-service reformers is, that they have been and still are in such a pressing hurry. Governor Hayes, for instance, in his letter of acceptance, contemplates curing a disease of fifty years' growth, imbedded all through our political system and woven into its every fibre, in a single term of four years. In the same spirit, Mr. Schurz confidently predicts, in the event of the election of Governor Hayes, " the employment in the government service of not one more party agent ; the abolition of the spoils system ; opposition to these reforms on

the part of the spoils politicians in Congress ; the overthrow of this opposition at the next Congressional elections." In Mr. Schurz's judgment, therefore, one half of President Hayes's single term will suffice for the whole work. Of course, if these two gentlemen do not underrate the magnitude of the task, there is nothing more to be said on the subject. It is a comparatively trifling work, and will be accomplished in a short space of time. If, however, the evil is of that portentous magnitude which others equally qualified to form an opinion have supposed, if it is, indeed, sapping the foundations of the government, then two things may safely be predicted of its cure : first, that it will not be effected in any one Presidential term ; and, secondly, that it will be the work of a party specially organized to do it, and not of a party formed to do other work and which assumes this one merely because its so doing may induce a half-in-earnest country to retain it in power.

In America almost every one, even reflecting men, seems to suppose that nothing can be done except by a party in power ; that the opposition has no functions to perform, can exercise no influence in the grand result. Accordingly, the advocate of administrative reform is now told that he must vote for Governor Hayes, because he is committed to it ; and he must vote against Governor Tilden, because he has no conception of it. Admitting the premises, the conclusion is very far from following. Let everything that can be said against Governor Tilden and the Democratic party, with their record, and in favor of Governor Hayes and the Republican party, with its " tendencies " and " impulses," be conceded for the sake of argument ; let it be acknowledged that the success of the former in the pending election would be followed by a " clean sweep " and a revolting scramble for office, ending in a carnival of jobbery and corruption ; let it be further conceded, though in the face of all experience, that the " tendency " of the Republican party is to reform, and that from those acting with that party only can reform ultimately be hoped for, — though all this be conceded, yet none the less the genuine, patient, thorough-going civil-service reformer would, in the present campaign, have good cause to cast his vote for Tilden. Before doing so he would probably argue thus. This question is one

of necessarily slow solution. It goes back in its history to the beginning. It involves the whole subtle question of the allocation of powers under the Constitution,—a question infinitely better understood eighty years ago than now. The present phase of the issue itself originated more than half a century ago. Briefly stated, the difficulty is, that a strong President then perverted the entire patronage of the government into a mass of plunder, with which to reward his partisans; since then, still regarding it as plunder, the legislative has usurped the executive patronage out of the hands of weak Presidents, and, accordingly, we now have the legislative dispensing, as its own, the plunder of the executive. Any real measure of reform, therefore, involves, in the first place, a long and doubtful struggle between the executive and the legislative, in which the former will seek to recover the power which legitimately belongs to it, and of which it has been deprived. A collision between the executive and the Senate will be the first stage of the struggle, and to overcome an oligarchy like the Senate will require a vigorous executive. We are now electing a President, not for life, but for the short term of four years, and deciding merely whether the Republican or Democratic party shall, during that time, control the executive department. During the last eight years the Republican party has been, with the exception of two years only, in absolute control of every department of the government. They went into it with the fairest professions in regard to the civil service, every one of which they have treated with contempt and ridicule. They have not even made a pretence of regarding them. And yet, notwithstanding all this, in that party, and in that party only, are found those active elements through which a thorough administrative reform can be brought about. The difficulty, however, is an obvious one. The party has never, on this subject, passed through that preliminary hardening and solidifying of opinion which is gained only in opposition. No party organized for other ends ever did, or ever will, accomplish any considerable new work until, educated up to it in opposition, it goes back into power prepared and pledged to accomplish it. Certain necessary preliminary stages have to be passed through. In keeping the Republican party in power, therefore, the friends

of civil-service reform, in so far as they have contributed to that result, have simply, after the manner of men, been good-natured, credulous, and impatient; they have magnified each four years into an eternity. After all, the longest way round may, in this case also, prove the shortest way home. There are limits to good-nature as well as to human patience, and men who are really in earnest do not like to be nourished too long on a somewhat insipid diet of "tendencies" and "impulses." It has sufficed for eight years, but before the end of twelve it may chance to grow monotonous. A wholesome defeat, followed by four years of life in opposition, might have a quickening tendency; it might ripen "tendencies" into intentions, and "impulses" into action, and promises into performance. Judging by experience, it is very certain nothing else will.

The remedy, then, is a simple one. Remembering the broken promises of 1868 and of 1872, the would-be "party of reform" must be held to an absolute and unrelenting responsibility for them, and must go out of power, no matter who comes in. During the next four years it can be of far more service in opposition than in office; and, even if the corruption and abuses of the coming four years exceed those of the last four, — a most improbable contingency, by the way, — it will but convince the people of the absolute necessity of reform and render the return to power of the reorganized Republican party a certainty of the future. After all, four years is, at most, a somewhat brief period of probation. In the case of the Democrats, sixteen have failed, as yet, to bring forth works meet for repentance. And, arguing thus, who could blame any determined civil-service reformer if he cast his vote for Governor Tilden, even though in so doing he voted also for Governor Hendricks?

Nor is this the whole argument in the case, nor, indeed, the strongest side of it. It must ever be borne in mind that the greatest present danger to be apprehended from the corrupt civil service arises, not from the fact of the spoils system, or the scandal of rotation in office, but from the utter subversion already suggested of a fundamental principle of our government, through the usurpation by the members of the Senate of

the appointing power of the President. In plain language, therefore, as a necessary preliminary to any effective measure of civil-service reform, the Senate has got to be compelled to surrender back to the executive its usurped powers. This it requires no very deep insight to know that body will never willingly do. Governor Hayes must have clearly foreseen the direct issue he was making when he said, in his letter of acceptance, that the control of the appointing power by members of Congress was an abuse which "ought to be abolished. The reform should be thorough, radical, and complete. . . . If [I am] elected . . . all constitutional powers vested in the executive will be employed to establish this reform."

In writing those words, could the Republican candidate for the Presidency have fully appreciated the nature of the struggle he was challenging? If so, how was it possible that he should have supposed that a single Presidential term would suffice for the work? The Republican party controls the Senate. That body is, indeed, the cerebral centre of what is best described as the Republican "machine." No matter who is elected President, the Senate will remain Republican. When President Hayes lays an exclusive hand on the patronage, he will lay a heavy, hostile hand on the whole famous "Senatorial group," and from that moment he divides his own camp, and exposes himself naked to his enemies. With Governor Tilden as President the case would be wholly different. In a struggle with an opposition Senate he would be backed to the bitter end by his whole party strength, and in all probability by the country too; for the Senate is not a popular body. As Jackson, supported by the House, broke it down once, Tilden might hope to do it again. The real friend of civil-service reform might well, therefore, be content to devote the next four years to the work of reducing, through the action of a Democratic President and House of Representatives, the Senate to its proper constitutional functions. The further work of reform might then be quietly and safely postponed to a later period. One thing at a time is enough, so that thing be done.

Against this it is usually argued that it will not be safe to trust the Democratic party in office, even for the brief term of

four years, in view of the possible mischief it might accomplish in that time. The deprivation of the blacks of all civil rights, the payment of the rebel war debts, the pensioning of Confederate officers and soldiers, and numerous other similar visions of terror, are conjured up. With an argument of this character it is almost humiliating to be called upon to deal. Again, the existence and obstructive power of an organized opposition, this time controlling the Senate, is ignored; and that, too, by the leaders of a party which, in complete control of the government in its every department, through six years out of eight, piteously claims that its utter failure during all that time to fulfil any of its pledges was due to the presence of a contemptible minority. Experience is, however, after all, the best of guides, and experience is not without its lights on this subject. The "ins" always do, and always have, unanimously averred, with a fervor which can only spring from heartfelt conviction, that the incoming of the "outs" will be shortly followed by the final crack of doom. A good many credulous people, from force of habit chiefly, can always be relied on, also, timorously to accept this view of the subject. Two years ago it was nervously argued by the party leaders, in the same spirit, that the country could not be so rash as to elect a Democratic House of Representatives; to trust, etc., etc. Yet, looking over the field, and judging by the record, no truly Independent Voter could probably now be found who would not admit that the existence of an opposition majority in one branch of Congress has been, during the last year, a piece of national good fortune; and, also, that the record of that opposition body will, as a whole, compare more than favorably with the records of either the Republican Senate or the Republican executive. No party, however, ever enjoys an exclusive possession of all the political virtue and intelligence of the country; and, as a rule, where parties are at all equally divided, they enjoy these desirable qualities in about an equal degree. In the present case, in spite of the alarming irruption at the front of individuals of a class designated by Judge E. R. Hoar as "bummers," there is undoubtedly some reason to suppose that the Republican organization, under the strong impulse of its great start, does still contain somewhat more than its relative

share of the better elements of our political life. The triumphant nomination of men of so low a political type as General B. F. Butler and his like, in some of the most intelligent of the Congressional districts of Massachusetts does, it is true, make the assertion either a little ludicrous or very melancholy ; but none the less it is probably true. And yet, practically, what does the difference amount to ? During the last eight years not a few States, North as well as South, have been under Democratic rule. What evidence is there that they have been worse governed than their Republican sisters ? Governor Gaston administered the affairs of Massachusetts quite as satisfactorily as either his Republican predecessor or successor. So Governor Tilden has administered those of New York, and Governor Hendricks those of Indiana, not less creditably, so far as the world knows, than Governor Hayes did those of Ohio. The United States government has of late years passed through some very considerable political trials, and, remembering them, it surely cannot be classed as an act of rashness to venture the prediction that in these piping times of peace its perpetuity will not be greatly endangered by four years of Democratic ascendancy. A sufficiently vigorous opposition, in control of the Senate, may at least save our institutions from any absolutely irreparable injury until the people can, two years hence, again come to the rescue. No ! There are abundance of good arguments ready at hand to justify any intelligent man in voting for Governor Hayes, but this shambling appeal to the absolute wickedness of the other side is not one of them.

It is clear, then, from what has been said, that the interests of the Independent reformers are not, in the long run, the interests of the party organizations. It is clear that the reformers cannot honestly join either party organization except to obtain a special and temporary purpose. It is clear that they must pass from one organization to the other according as one or the other offers the best chance for obtaining reform. And it is clear that there are points of the most weight in the eyes of reformers in respect to which they have no choice but to struggle, as best they can, against the weight of both party organizations combined.

Let us then attempt to state as simply and distinctly as pos-

sible the reform platform. And since the reform here intended means, not currency reform, not revenue reform, not administrative reform, but all these only so far as they tend to result in political reform ; since the common ground on which all honest men can meet is not that of restoring a sound basis to exchanges, or freedom to commerce, or decency to the executive, but that of purifying the political system and correcting the vices of political practice, — it is inevitable that reformers who mean to work together for any practical object and with any but visionary hopes of success should lay aside their peculiar hobbies and abstain from insisting upon individual theories. The field of reform is in itself so vast, and the hopes of reformers are so faint, that the least they undertake is likely to be beyond their force.

The single great end to which all reformers, whatever their private theories may be, must look is distinct enough ; it is to overcome the tendency of our political system to corruption. All political systems, no doubt, have some tendency, greater or less, towards corruption. The peculiarity of ours is that it moves, and for fifty years has moved, in that direction with accelerating pace, and it has now arrived at a point where even the blindest patriots see that, unless the evil is checked, our political system must break down and some new experiment must be substituted in its place. The ground, therefore, and the only ground on which all honest men can unite and insist with one voice upon reform, is that of resistance to the corruptions of our political system.

These corruptions are the growth of the last fifty years. Previous to that time there were no doubt numerous cases of legislative and official dishonesty, some of which were fully as disgusting as any of the "carpet-bag" revelations. But there was no systematized political corruption, none that was more serious than the ordinary frailty of human beings, until about fifty years ago the present system of party organization, bred in the gutter of New York politics, was adopted by the entire nation. These party organizations, growing up outside the Constitution, wielding a power never dreamed of by the framers of the Constitution, began by assuming as their own property the patronage of the national as well as the state and municipal

governments. Fortified and consolidated by this great and rapidly increasing source of pecuniary and political power, these organizations have steadily proceeded to other and even more corrupting acquisitions, until at length there is in the entire range of national, state, and municipal politics, with few exceptions, no considerable interest dependent upon legislation which does not pay or has not paid its tax to the support of a party organization ; and, what is the most fatal of all symptoms, there are few interests engaged in secret evasions or violations of the law, robbing the public treasury and making private honesty impossible, which have not, as a condition of their existence, been made to contribute to the same political system. From such a state of things no result is possible except destruction, because it can generate nothing but corruption.

The problem of reform is then to devise such a system of measures as shall if possible cut up these evils by the roots. These measures, however, in order to stand even a remote chance of success, must be perfectly practical and not too far in advance of public opinion and public prejudice.

It is obvious at a glance that currency reform, or return to specie payments, is not so closely connected with this issue as some other measures. A debased and fluctuating currency is rather a social than a political evil. Party organizations may indeed at some future day find means here too of drawing nutriment from treasury issues, but as yet it is the individual and not the party which looks to profit from that source. Yet it is undoubtedly true that whatever tends to shake the foundations of public morals, tends also and very strongly to increase the power of party organizations. The reformer, however, requires a return to specie payments most of all because until the public can be brought to acknowledge principles of common honesty, there is not the shadow of a hope that it can be persuaded to grapple with points of political expediency.

Next to the question of returning to specie payments, nothing has more keenly seized on public attention than the contests of the Treasury Department under Secretary Bristow with the Whiskey Ring. These were in fact contests of the national government with creatures of its own creation. The strength of the Whiskey Ring consisted in the extent to which it had

succeeded in identifying its interests with those of the party organizations. It is idle to suppose that mere administrative reform can effectively deal with this evil. Administrative reform can do much. A careful and thorough revision of the revenue laws, diminishing the inducement offered to dishonest evasion and distributing the taxes over objects which can neither be concealed nor are matters of discretion, will do more. But the utmost skill of administration, and the utmost care in framing the laws, will at best cut off only one source of party support. It is true that this source is the most scandalous and the vilest; but, if reform is to be limited to this result, it will be a reform of the slightest kind. If our modern statesmen stop here, they are mere mountebanks. The evil will revive with the next turn of the political wheel.

Tariff reform is of the same nature. It is a matter of course that every true reformer must require a return to specie payments, a revision of the internal-revenue laws, and a revision of the tariff, from any administration that claims his support. An entire abandonment of the theory of protection is essential to the purification of politics. Nor is it a matter of much consequence whether individual reformers accept or reject this article of their creed. If one part of the old system goes, all must go, and the reform movement will either be fruitless or it will carry out its principles to the end.

All these measures of reform, necessary as they are, attack merely the outposts of corruption. They would, if successful, considerably reduce the resources of the political organizations; but when it is considered how infinite the ramifications of these party-supplies are, and how extraordinary the skill with which new sources are constantly developed, it is ridiculous to suppose that these measures, even if adopted to their utmost extent, would offer any permanent cure for the radical evils of our political system.

No serious impression can ever be made on those evils until they are attacked at their source; not until the nation is ready to go back to the early practice of the government and to restore to the constitutional organs those powers which have been torn from them by the party organizations for purposes of party aggrandizement. The fabric of party must be reduced

to a size that corresponds with its proper functions. The relation between the party system and the constitutional system must be reversed.

The peculiar difficulty, the almost desperate character of this reform, arises not so much from the intrinsic strength of the parties whose wealth and power are to be attacked, as from the extent to which they have twisted their roots round and among the organs of the Constitution itself. Fortune or popular feeling may perhaps rescue the executive from their grasp. Not impossibly the more popular branch of Congress may follow the executive in abandoning such hold as it has on the patronage of the government. But the case is much more serious with the Senate. That body, if it had been created for the purpose, could not have been more ingeniously constructed to serve as the fortress of party organization and the focus of party intrigue. Such it has been from the earliest days of the Republic; such it must be until that government is in its grave. The long tenure of the senatorial office; the small number of Senators; their peculiar importance as the constitutional advisers of the executive in many cases where their advice is equivalent to command; their constitutional right to a share in the appointing power; their inevitable position, a consequence of their peculiar power, as heads of the party organizations in their own States; and the equally inevitable consequence of bringing together in one small body the principal heads of the local party organizations, — all combine to make the Senate an almost if not quite irresistible agent of political corruption.

To wring from the grasp of the Senate its established control over the national patronage implies a struggle between the Senate and the executive which may well shake our political system to its centre. It is this struggle to which all the clearest and coolest heads in the country have looked forward as the next great political issue since the close of the Rebellion. It is this struggle which our last President shrank from and which our next President must inevitably face.

The simplest form in which the least possible demands of reform can for the time be met and satisfied is that of a law enacting that all officers, except heads of department and their assistant secretaries, and such as may be specially provided

for by the Constitution, shall hold their appointments during good behavior. That such a law would be within the constitutional powers of the legislature may be considered as established by the Tenure-of-Office Act. Objection on this score could have little weight. The only questions that would seriously interest reformers are whether such a law would be commensurate with the evil ; whether its provisions could be enforced without evasion ; whether it might not end in still further disorganizing the government by giving to officials the unlimited right to intrigue against the President, at the very moment it deprived the President of the power to protect his own administration by enforcing necessary discipline ; whether, in short, it is possible to adopt such a law without enacting also that any interference, direct or indirect, by any office-holder in the management of party politics, or any attempt on his part, direct or indirect, to control elections, shall be deemed a violation of good behavior, and when proved to the satisfaction of the President, it shall be the President's duty to remove such official from office.

The propriety of such a law is perfectly recognized by every man who has watched the atrocities of the last four years, and the cynical contempt with which office-holders, in open control of a corrupt and venal party organization, have laughed in the face of every decent remonstrant, and throttled every honest political opinion within their party lines. The case may not be improved by encouraging them to defy the President also. The time, it is to be hoped, will come when conduct such as is now the rule among the servants of the people will be punished with some sharper penalty than removal from office ; but so long as the American public crouches, in a sort of good-natured ignorance of its dignity, under acts of its officials which even in France would rouse forcible resistance, the utmost that reformers can hope is to obtain a recognition of the simplest principle, without insisting upon what is as yet unattainable.

This series of great measures implies, under the most favorable circumstances, many years of incessant struggle, and probably more than one serious political crisis. And even after all these measures have been adopted, if adoption is possible, there remains still a greater mass of corruption at the

bottom of our political system than has ever been known in the party organizations of other constitutional governments. No national legislation can deprive parties of the absolute control of state governments, state patronage, and state legislation in party interests. No political wisdom has yet even suggested a satisfactory solution of the difficulties of municipal government; and so long as there are ignorant and vicious multitudes, so long there will be Tweeds and Sweenys to organize and manage the political machinery of the caucus and the convention. No professional skill can so frame legislation as to exclude the possibility of profitable fraud; and so long as there is money to corrupt, there will be parties to hide the corruption and to receive their reward. The struggle is to be one, not of our own day, but for an indefinite future, and the utmost that can now be hoped is not to destroy, but only to make head against, the political disease; not to expel it from the system, but to drive it from the national government back to its strongholds in the States and municipalities.

If the supremacy of party organizations is to remain unshaken, it matters comparatively little which of the two great parties is to conduct the government. Both are founded upon the same system, and both must lead to the same results. The hopes of reform lie entirely with the Independent voters and thinkers. One by one the great organs of public opinion have assumed the Independent position. One by one the honestest and abler leaders of thought have followed and are following the same irresistible tendency. On this steady growth of Independent opinion the hopes of reformers are built, not on the momentary triumph of any party or of any party leader. And whichever party may in the impending election be elevated to power will command the active support of Independents precisely in that extent to which it shall initiate and honestly support the reforms here set forth.

Whether the Republicans or the Democrats succeed in electing their candidates, it is evident already that whoever is inaugurated President in March, 1877, will enter upon the duties of his office pledged to measures of reform. Then will come the time of trial, and just so long as the next President, be his name Hayes or Tilden, be he Democrat or be he Re-

publican, respects his pledges, and honestly tries to make them good, so long will he be entitled to the uncompromising and earnest support of every honest Independent Voter. If Governor Hayes should be elected, there is reason to hope that Mr. Schurz may represent the Independent reform element in his Cabinet, side by side, perhaps, with Bristow, Evarts, or Curtis. In such an event it will surely be remembered that Mr. Schurz is the natural leader of the Independent Voters; that he, more than any other man in the country, personifies that which they wish to see introduced into politics; that he is the spear-head to which they are but a shaft. Nor is his constituency likely to fail him. It is not unsafe to say that, if President Hayes summons Mr. Schurz to be of the number of his advisers, every member of the Fifth Avenue conference, whether he voted for Hayes or for Tilden, or stayed at home, will give his administration an earnest and unqualified support as long as Mr. Schurz remains in it. His record is evidence that he would not long remain in it when the promises of 1876 had begun to prove as barren of results as those of 1872. On the other hand, if Governor Tilden is elected, it is probable that he, too, will summon to his councils some representative man like Mr. Wells or Mr. Godwin or Mr. Sherman, and, in that case, while he abides by his professions, no one who knows Mr. Schurz can for a moment doubt that he will yield him a cordial and loyal support. It is hereafter — when the election, with its fair words, is over, and the administration, with its hard acts, is begun — that the real struggle is to take place, and the Independent intelligence of the country must make itself politically felt.